



Bridgeport Sites
968 Fairfield Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06605
(203) 330-6000

46 Albion Street
(203) 330-6000

1046 Fairfield Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06605
(203) 330-6054

510 Clinton Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06605
(203) 366-4000

743 South Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06604
(203) 330-6010

School Based
Health Centers
Bassick High School
Central High School
Blackham School
Read School
Roosevelt School
Cesar Batalla

Homeless Shelters
Bridgeport Sites
CASA
Helping Hand
Pivot Ministries
Prospect House
Brooks Street Shelter
Harrison Apartments
Fairfield Site
Operation Hope

WIC Site
1020 Fairfield Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06605



Joint Commission
on Accreditation of
Healthcare Organizations

Testimony of

**Katherine S. Yacavone, President and Chief Executive Officer
Southwest Community Health Center, Inc.**

**46 Albion St.
Bridgeport, CT 06605**

On Department of Public Health's Proposal on Financial Assistance for Community Health Centers

Good morning Senators Harp and Gerratana, Representatives Walker and Johnson and Committee members. Thank you for holding this public hearing regarding the DPH line item funding for community health centers (CHCs). DPH funding supports delivery of primary care to the State's most vulnerable populations. The current primary health care needs of state residents and funding appropriations since 2010 are presented in the Department's Report.

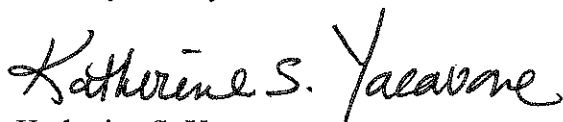
Over several years, the origin of the methodology for this important line item funding has been lost and grants to CHCs did not conform to the methodology. As a result, several health centers that received initial line item funding, like Southwest Community Health Center (SWCHC), have, over a decade, expanded primary care service delivery to an increased number of uninsured clients, while line item funds have been dramatically reduced. For calendar year 2012, SWCHC rendered primary care services to 20, 138 unduplicated clients, 27.5% (5,549) were uninsured and in 2008, SWCHC served 5,495 uninsured persons. While the level of uninsured persons has remained fairly constant over the past 5 years, the cost of adding expanded primary care services (e.g. mental health) has increased and SWCHC's funding has plunged from \$411,421 in 2008 to a current level of \$243,461, **a drop of 59%**. This funding directly supports physicians, dentists, and mid level providers. A drop of this magnitude in DPH funding has impacted my ability to retain and recruit providers.

I urge both committees to ask the Department of Public Health to develop a new methodology that is equitable for all CHCs, so "winners and losers" are not created. Access to care is eroded if CHCs do not have sufficient revenue to retain a primary care workforce to treat uninsured clients. I recommend that CHCs be "held harmless" at least at their current funding levels, so that no center receives less money as a new formula is established. Additional funds may have to be allocated to the Community Health Services line item to achieve a more equitable formula.

Whatever formula is ultimately developed, I would urge that contract quarterly payments to CHCs be distributed in a timely manner. CHCs continue to fulfill the contract requirements and provide services every day to uninsured state residents; but, our ability to continue to do so without timely reimbursement places a great financial strain on the agency budgets that are already stressed.

Southwest Community Health Center is a federally qualified health center (FQHC) based in Bridgeport that serves over 20,000 people annually, delivering primary medical care, medical specialty care, mental health and substance abuse treatment and dental care. As the Committee members know, **FQHCs turn no patients away – regardless of ability to pay.** For Southwest, care is provided in a variety of locations – 18 health center locations in our state's largest and poorest city. Adequate support from the Department of Public Health is critical to SWCHC's ability to deliver quality, person centered care to over 5,500 uninsured patients annually.

Thank you for your attention.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katherine S. Yacavone". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Katherine S. Yacavone
President/CEO
SWCHC
12/12/13